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ABSTRACT

Parents' participation in their children's education is still a relatively new concept in the Czech Republic. Yet the parent-school relationship is considered essential for educational reform. This paper is the first report on research on the role of parents as educational and social partners of the schools. The research examines these relationships through the frameworks of national legislation and the media's view on education. The purpose of the research is to better understand the potentialities, duties, and rights of parents as essential participants in the education of their children. Data were gathered from analyses of national legislation, records of selected schools, two newspapers, two TV news programs, and one educational journal. An examination of legislation and school documents failed to clearly define a role for parents or to create models for partnerships. It seems that relationships between parents and the schools will develop only from the goodwill and sincere efforts of each. The media portray an unfavorable picture of educational institutions in general and teachers in particular. This creates an obstacle for partnerships. Overall, the existence of partnerships between parents and the schools is more theoretical than actual. (Contains 12 references.) (WFA)

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The Role of Parents as Educational and Social Partners of the School in the Czech Republic: Legislation and Media Analysis

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Educational triangle: parents – child - teacher

Significance of parents for school life and its development is nowadays generally acknowledged in the Czech Republic. Although this trend does not have as long a tradition as in most western European countries, where it has been developing since the 80s, it has achieved its position in contemplation about the quality of the school education and it has been keeping this position for a few past years. Parents are considered a very important part of an educational triangle which consists of a child, a teacher and parents. More and more they are discussed in terms of being a part of the school, acting for the school and at the same time overreaching their interest in and care of their own child - thus taking the role of social partners of the school. But starting this kind of partnership in practice is not without problems.

Various works published in this field find out obstacles and problems in mutual relationships between the school and the family. These problems stem from a whole range of conditions, from the macrostructural ones to the individual - communicational ones. Husén, for instance, discusses the fact that some of the discrepancies result from the very nature of the family and the school as institutions. Relationships in the family may be described as functional diffusion, i.e. the family members are engaged in the relationships with others in every respect: they live in one and the same place, spend their free time together, eat together etc. Whereas the school is a place with specific relationships where specific roles and tasks are distributed according to the distribution of roles of teachers and students. This is the source of discontinuity in the nature of the relationships between individuals. It is just the same with the relationships in the family as opposed to other public institutions. Family relationships are of emotional background whereas relationships in public institutions depend on positions of the two parties engaged at the point of encounter (Husén, 1992). We may certainly find other explanation schemes as well, e.g. teacher professionalism (Armstrong, 1995) or parent consumerism (Vincent, 2000).

Situation in the 1990s in the Czech Republic: way to partnership?

In 1995 we carried out a research which was concentrated on the issue of relationships and communication between the school and the family. The starting premise was rooted in considering the communication barrier between these two sides which is caused by the lack of mutual trust and respect. During the research we concentrated on the mutual perception of the two sides engaged (how they perceive each other), on their expectations, their evaluation

criteria (what criteria are involved in the parents' judgement of the school quality?, what criteria are involved in the teachers' judgement of the parental care?) and on their common activities. In the conclusion we had to state that "the quality of communication and co-operation between the school and parents is not very satisfactory", that "the schools nowadays are in the phase of gradual opening and cautious search for the ways of approaching the parents of their pupils" and that "there are attempts and partial initiatives from both sides but their effectiveness is to be doubted" (Rabušicová, Pol, 1996).

In that time the need of dealing with such an issue resulted from significant changes in the Czech educational system which happened after "the velvet revolution" in 1989. It was the general democratizational process which was reflected in the functioning of the educational system as a whole as well as in the working of individual schools. One of the most significant things was initiating the subsidiarity principle in management and co-operation with social partners of the school, the educational and social partnership with parents included.

Contemporary situation: contextual point of view

The trend of changes in the Czech educational system, which began in the 1990s, continues. The topic of parents in relation to school is still an issue which is considered one of the headstones in building good educational environment for children. This is also the reason why we came back to this issue, from a different point of view, after six years again. This year we have started a three-year research project[1] under the name of The Role of Parents as Educational and Social Partners of the School. Parents as **educational partners** of the school are defined as individuals and groups entering relationships with the school because they are interested in their children, their upbringing and education. Parents as **social partners** are defined as individuals and groups entering relationships with the school because they are interested in the development of the school as an institution.

The whole project was led by the attempt at understanding all potentialities, duties and rights of the parents as an essential actors in the process of education of their own children in relation to the school. The goal is to contribute to the answers to questions connected with the role of parents as educational and social partners of the school. We are interested in the extend to which the real situation in the position of parents in relation to the school is compatible to

[1] It is a research project supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (no. 406/01/1077).

various theoretical sources and in what activities may support and develop parents' position in schools.

We try to get a wider - complex and contextual- view of the issue of parental partnership in relation to the school. In this article we try to concentrate on two areas which, in our point of view, help to create this kind of context. It is the legislative framework that constitutes the basis for potentialities and ways of establishing and developing partnership and it is also the media framework that influences input ideas and expectations of parents who are to enter the relationships with the school.

Legislative framework[2]

We know that parents partly delegate their role in upbringing and education of their children to the school, and it is compulsory. We also know that the school has its potentialities, duties and rights in relation to parents as well. In this part we concentrate on the real extend to which these conditions are legislatively dealt with in the Czech Republic: Who the parents really are in relation to the school? What role is ascribed to parents and how precisely is this role defined in legislative and other educational documents? To what extend is it possible to talk about educational partnership and to what extend about social partnership?

We started with the content analysis of legislative documents (laws), *The White Book on Education in the Czech Republic* and educational documents of certain chosen schools.

General Role of Parents[3]

The position of parents, their rights in particular but also their duties, is included in *The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms* which is incorporated into the Czech constitution. For us the starting point is the fact that such parenthood protection is incorporated into this primary legal norm: "*Parenthood and the family are under protection of the law. Special protection of children and adolescents is guaranteed* „ (Act no. 2/1993 of the Code of Laws, article 32, paragraph 1). Further on: "*Care of children and their upbringing are the right of their parents; children are entitled to parental upbringing and care. Parental rights may be limited and minor children may be taken away from their parents against the latter's will only by judicial decision on the basis of law* „ (ibid., paragraph 4). In the above

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[2] This part is rooted in a larger article presented in June 2001 at the 9th conference of the Czech Association for the Educational Research under the name of The Role of Parents in Relation to School: analysis of the legislature by Milada Rabušicová and Jiří Zounek.

[3] The term parents is not the only one used in legal documents. The term "legal representatives" of the child or the pupil is also used.

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document only the rights are mentioned, not the duties.

The general position of parents is also defined in *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*: *„States, which are the contracting parties, will make every effort to establish the principle that both of the parents are equally responsible for the education and development of their child. Parents, or in certain cases legal representatives, are primarily responsible for the education and development of their child. At the same time the fundamental reason for their care should be their interest in the child*" (Announcement about the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, no. 104/1991 of the Code of Laws, article 18, paragraph 1).The *Convention* talks about parents' responsibility for the child's education and development. The mentioned document also generally defines the duty of the state in the area of education: "*In order to guarantee and support the rights defined by the Convention the states, which are the contracting parties in the Convention, provide the parents and legal representatives with necessary help in fulfilling their task of educating their children and guarantee the development of institutions, facilities and services concerned with childcare*„ (ibid., paragraph 2).

Parents as educational partners of the school

Educational partnership is to be understood as equal and full-scope entrance of parents to relationships with the school concerning children, their upbringing and education. Incorporation of parents as educational partners of the school into the educational process is usually rooted in such arguments as (1) the better the childcare the more the parent understands what, why and how successfully the child is engaged in at school, (2) significant influence of the parents' attitudes to school education transferred to the child and (3) positive influence of the parents' incorporation into the school on the child's results and their attitudes to learning (Docking, 1990, Campbell, 1992, Henderson, 1987).

We are interested in whether and how the educational partnership is defined in the legislature. Primary legal norms mainly define the rights and responsibility for education and development of the child. The Family Act emphasises the role of parents in education of children: "*Crucial role in the education of children is that of parents*" (Act no. 94/1963 of the Code of Laws, on family, article 32., paragraph 1). This fact is also reflected in the School Act: "*The legal representative of the child, foster-parent, citizen or an institution, that a child was consign to by a judicial verdict, is obliged to enrol a child at the school age in school and take care that the child goes to school regularly and in time; they are also obliged to make a declaration to the child's application for secondary-school studies. If they enrol the child in*

a club for after- school activities, they are obliged to take care that the child goes there regularly and in time„ (Act no. 29/1984 of the Code of Laws, on the system of primary, secondary and higher vocational schools (the School Act), in the form of subsequent laws, article 36). According to the School Act legal representative (parents) applies for the school admission of the child, for the postponement of the compulsory education (in case all the conditions defined by the law are fulfilled). The relationship between the parents and the school at the level of kindergartens is defined quite clearly. "*Kindergarten co-operates with parents or child's legal representatives (further on "child's representative" only) and other citizens with the aim of developing activities and organising events for the sake of the development of the pre-school-age children and deepening of the mutual educational influence of the kindergarten, family and the public*" (Ordinance no. 35/1992, on kindergartens, article 2, paragraph 3). In the above ordinance the kindergarten is also defined as a certain guidance institution for parents. "*In order to ensure due education of children, who cannot visit the kindergarten, the kindergarten provides, by request of the child's representative, professional guidance concerning the child's education*" (ibid., article 1, paragraph 2). Rather a different definition is presented in the Act on School Facilities: "*Pre-school education guarantees the satisfaction of the child's natural needs and the development of their personality; it proceeds in co-operation with the family and the pre-school facility*" (Act no. 76/1978 of the Code of Law, on school facilities, in the form of subsequent laws, part 2, article 2).

Explicit declaration, that the school facility is obliged to cooperate with parents for the sake of the child's development and for the sake of deepening of the mutual educational influence of the family and the school facility, is only incorporated into documents concerning kindergartens. We assume that such an enactment should also apply to the period of school age because "the crucial role in children's education is that of the parents" and the institution should help them with this task.

Parents are obliged to cooperate with the school in case the child cannot visit the school because of their health, in case their child is extremely gifted in a certain field and in case parents doubt the justice of classification (Ordinance no. 219/1991, on primary school, article 4, paragraph 2, paragraph 3, article 11, paragraph 3).

It may be deduced from the above text that parents as educational partners of the school are understood in the Czech legislature as those who the school needs for taking decisions on their child. By this the Family Act is literally fulfilled. The Act says that parents

have the "decision-making" role in the education of their children. What is not mentioned in the legislature is the support for such a role.

Parents as social partners of the school

The social partnership of parents is to be understood as their relationships with the school for the sake of the school as an institution. Argument for incorporating parents into the school as its social partners are rooted in the parents' rights, in their equal status, in reciprocal relationships and mutual support (Wolfendale, 1992, Macbeth, 1989). Let us have a look at whether and how this situation is reflected in the Czech legislature.

The contemporary School Act does not say anything about this problem apart from the fact that parents as a group may rather closely cooperate with the school in school boards whose status is defined in the Act on State Administration and Self-administration in Educational System which says: "*School board is the school's body enabling the legal representatives of pupils under age, pupils of age, school's employees, community's citizens and other persons to take part in managing the school*" (Act no. 564/1990 of the Code of Laws, part 5, article 17a). The above act also defines the conditions for establishing the school board, its structure, rights etc.

The school heads are very much responsible in the area of co-operation with parents. This responsibility is put on them by the law: "*The head is responsible for processing an annual report and letting the public into the annual report concerning the school's activities and the annual report concerning the school's budgetary control and hands these reports over to the school board. The head is obliged to take part in the school board's proceedings if they are asked by the board to do so. The head of the school guarantees that the legal representatives of an under-age pupil are informed about the process of education of the pupil*" (Act no. 564/1990 of the Code of Laws, part 2, article 3, paragraph 1). The community, which exercises its interests towards the school facilities, may also interfere with the relationships between the parents and the school (ibid., part 4, article 15, paragraph 1).

Taking into consideration that the contemporary number of school boards is next to nothing and that other school bodies formed as various parents' associations are not without problems, the role of parents as a group and as social partners of the school is actually taken care of by the above mentioned enactments about the school boards but in practice it is non-existent.

Parents in school annual reports

As we found out, in the Czech legislature there are not many clearly defined conditions for parents' interference with the school activities. It may, however, be assumed that schools themselves will take their own various initiatives. As we found out from the analysis - the school's annual reports in particular - it is not so in all cases of school documentation.

We started with methodology which is used by school heads for processing the school annual report.[4] This methodology makes clear that schools are obliged to inform the public about the co-operation with parents and moreover, the relationships between the parents and school are a necessary part of the every school's characteristics. In reality, however, the annual reports mention the concrete school activities in relation to parents or the parents' activities either in individual or in group form only sporadically.

Parents in the White Book[5]

We may say that the *White Book* puts rather a great emphasis on the relationships of parents (or other subjects) and schools at many levels. It seems that both general starting points and concrete suggestions for arranging the relationships between the school and the parents are "more modern" in the *White Book* than in the contemporary legislature. Thus it means that if we succeed to incorporate both the mentioned issues into the prepared legal norms, the new School Act, there could be made a fundamental step further to more significant and differentiated incorporation of parents into the institutional education of their children. The contemporary bill of the new School Act, however, takes into consideration the new legal norms (i.e. Act no. 101/2000 of the Code of Laws, on personal data protection) and makes rather clear statements about individual areas, it does not overcome the contemporary legal norms.

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[4] We studied 25 annual reports of schools in Brno. Only three of them have a fully working school board established. In three cases the school board was not established though the school management proposed it. Two of the reports present the lack of interest from parents as the reason for not establishing the school board and in one case there is also the lack of interest from teachers reported. Two of the schools have the Club of Parents and Friends of the School, in eight cases there was established a parents' association (the titles vary in details), in one case there is the Association for the Support of the School. The annual reports are very brief about their activities: it is usually discussions about parents' comments raised in meetings of parents and teachers, in one case it is a discussion about important financial and organizational issues, about helping with various school activities and about financial aid from parents.

[5] The Czech *White Book on Education in the Czech Republic* came into being after a long-lasting professional and public discussion during the end of 2000. It, more or less, expresses a compromising idea about a desirable form of the Czech educational system and about ways of achieving such a form. The summary presents basic information about the *White Book* in the Czech Republic and commentary on the *White Book* is presented in an article published in an on-line magazine icponline.org. under the name of The White Book: What does it mean for Education in the Czech Republic by Milan Pol and Milada Rabušicová.

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Summary

Concerning the fact that our task is not considering the relationships between the parents and the school in detail but finding proofs about what role is ascribed to parents in the Czech educational system, taking into consideration the legislature and school documentation in particular, we need to state that we have not found very many clearly defined conditions for this role of theirs.

Docking (1990) identifies three basic attitudes to parents. The first one, which considers "parents as a problem", is based on the premise that parents are not interested in their children's education. This attitude to parents may find some support in that part of legislature which talks about "the possibility of limiting the rights of parents by judicial verdict on the basis of law".

Another view of parents presents "parents as customers" who "chose a school for their children so that the child could make the greatest use possible of the choice" (Pol, Rabušicová, 1998:14). This attitude also assumes that parents have right to information about their child from the school, to discussions about educational content and methods and to advice about how they themselves may help their child. This view of parents as customers be found in the Czech legislature as well, though the form of providing parents with professional educational advice and guidance is explicit only in the case of kindergartens. In the case of primary schools this attitude to parents appears in four forms: parents have right to choose a school for their children even though the preferred catchment-area system limits their right, further on parents have right to be informed about their child, they take part in the decision-making process about transferring their extremely gifted child to a higher grade and they can apply for resitting an examination with the presence of a commission if they doubt the result of the examination.

The last attitude to parents is viewing then as "partners". According to Wolfendale (1983) partnership is a state when parents are active and central figures in the process of decision-making and transferring the decisions into practice, they have the same authority and equivalent expertise as people at school, they are able to give, get and also share their responsibility with experts. Such a challenging form of partnership is more an ideal which needs to be aimed at for a long time than an easily achievable goal. It is obvious that such a form of parental partnership could not be found in the Czech legislature either. If we take into consideration the exact content of the Czech legislature, we may divide it into two areas,

namely educational partnership and social partnership. In the first case the partnership nearly overlaps with a "customer attitude". Only in the second case, the social partnership, there is a possible support in the legislature, namely in the school boards. On the other hand we know that the school boards are very rare.

No matter whether we regard the parents as problems, customers or partners of the school, we may always find a certain inclination to one of these models in many legislative formulations. The parental partnership which we consider the desirable model may only be found in the *White Book*.

Media framework

Parents, just as everyone of us, enter relationships with another partner, in this case with a teacher or another school representative, with a certain idea, view or expectation. Discoveries of our previous research in 1995, and certainly not only these, tell us that there is a whole range of barriers, even prejudices, which influence and very often also problematize communication between parents and their school partners. These are rooted, among others, in parents' view of their children's school and of educational system in general.

How may such a view of school and educational system come into being? It must be based on a whole range of influences. Some of them are probably information (both explicit and implicit) which parents receive from their child, from other students' parents, from teachers and other people from the school. Another significant factor are the parents' memories of their own school age. Another significant role is played by information from the media. Out of this incomplete list we chose to focus on the analysis of the last mentioned source contributing to the parental view of the school - **on the media**.

Sample

We chose two most read Czech newspapers, "Dnes" (Today) and "Právo" (Right), news programmes in two most watched TV stations ("ČT1" and "Nova"), out of which the first one is public and the other one private, and one specialised journal entitled "Rodina a škola" (Family and School). We were analysing all these media for the whole past year of 2000.

Next there are brief characteristics of individual media:

Dnes (Today)

- daily newspaper, published six times a week, average number of pages is 51 a day (sheet of 1 page is 988 cm^2)
- average issue is 370.000 copies
- the most read daily newspaper in the Czech Republic with its own on-line section "idnes"

- regarded as a serious newspaper
- focused on news above the local character and on news of international character
- educational issues appear very often and regularly (nearly daily)
- in special sections the *White Book* and some pedagogical innovations were introduced

Právo (Right)

- daily newspaper, published six times a week, average number of pages is 22 a day (sheet of 1 page is 1.305 cm^2)
- average issue is 250.000 copies
- the second most read daily newspaper in the Czech Republic
- long tradition, in the past connected with the communist party as party's newspaper, in the present looking for a new image without the connection with the communist party
- educational issues appear rather irregularly and occasionally
- contributions ramble between attempts at seriousness and tendency to sensation - educational issues mostly appear in connection with problems, scandals and abnormal phenomena (i.e. pupil or teacher criminality, bad food in school cafeterias and money shortage)

ČT1 news programme

- public TV station
- name of the analysed programme is "Události" (Events)
- it is a publicistic programme which is daily on air at 19:15
- its length is from 18 to 25 minutes, average length is 21 minutes, on week days the length of the programme is 22 minutes on average and at weekends 20 minutes
- publicistic section "Tady a ted" (Here and now) is on air from Monday to Friday only and lasts 5 minutes on average (once in 2000 this section was devoted to an educational issue)

Nova news programme

- private TV station
- name of the analysed programme is "Televizní noviny" (Television newspaper)
- it is a publicistic programme which is daily on air at 19:30
- average length is 16 minutes

Rodina a škola (Family and School)

- journal with twelve issues a year out of them two are double issues: 6-7 (June and July) and 8-9 (August and September), thus ten real issues
- issue of 12 000 copies
- about sixty per cent of copies are subscribed by schools (editor's unofficial information)
- every issue has 24 pages (sheet of 1 page is 450 cm^2, thus the overall sheet of every issue is 10 800 cm^2), overall sheet of the journal is 10x10 800=108 000 cm^2 a year
- overall sheet of contributions concerning educational system is 21694 cm^2, i.e. 20,08 per cent
- the journal is aimed at parents and devoted to issues connected with children's education in the largest sense possible (health, food, communication ...), thus school is only one of the many issues which the journal deals with

Criteria according to which the individual statements were chosen and evaluated are the following ones:

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Content criteria for the statement choice:

We chose all statements concerned with educational system, namely its conception, management and administration, further on concerned with kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, including all information connected with this issue.

Formal criteria for the statement choice:

In the case of press materials we chose inquiries, articles, interviews, publicistic series and news with local or general information. In the case of TV broadcasting we dealt with all kinds of publicistic forms in "Události" (Events) and "Televizni noviny" (Television Newspaper) programmes.

Criteria for evaluation:

Chosen statements about educational system were evaluated according to what possible feelings they may raise in the non-professional public - i.e. whether the view of educational system they create is positive (e.g. various innovations, pay-rise for teachers, building of new schools, pupils' activities aiming at the society's benefit), neutral (discussions about the needed changes in particular) or negative (e.g. teachers ready to go on strike, liquidation of schools, low professionalism or teachers' payment, pupil criminality).

Research items

We were interested in what issues concerned with schools and educational system are most often in the mass media. We were also interested in the ways these issues are evaluated. In other words, is it possible to say that the media view of schools, teachers etc. is positive, neutral or negative? Further on, we were interested in how much space these media dedicate to issues of schools, particularly kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (we did not deal with universities) and the whole educational system. Finally, we were interested in whether there is also a view of parents created by the media and whether such a view may be positive or negative.

What issues concerning schools and educational systems are discussed in the mass media?

Issues, which appeared in the media, are categorised in the following way:

1. TEACHERS (teachers' payment, their education, criminality, social prestige, feminisation of the teaching profession, teachers' working opportunities)

2. TEACHING (pedagogical innovations at schools, foreign language teaching, computers at classes and at schools, individual subjects)

3. PUPILS AND STUDENTS (child criminality - bullying and drugs, fear of school, child suicides, physical punishment, health problems - epidemics, accidents, extraordinary incidents, behaviour disorders and learning disorders)

4. PARENTS (AND SCHOOL)

5. CYCLIC EVENTS IN THE SCHOOL YEAR (annual certificates, beginning and end of the school year, entrance examinations, secondary school final examination, school choice)

6. SCHOOL – INSTITUTION (school autonomy, contemporary news from schools, building and maintenance of schools, various problems)

7. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (AND ITS CHANGES) (information about the Ministry of Education and from the Ministry of Education, the *White Book*, eight-year gymnasium, new secondary school final examination, financing, school management and administration, international projects and research)

Distribution of issues in the daily newspapers "Dnes" and "Právo" and in the specialised journal "Rodina a škola" is indicated in the following chart (fig. no. 1). Next chart (fig. no. 2) indicates the same but in the TV broadcasting.

Figure no. 1: Issues concerning school and educational system in the press

	Dnes		*Právo*		*Rodina a škola*	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Teachers	30	11	23	16	3	6
Teaching	49	17	14	10	17	35
Students	16	6	20	14	11	22
Parents	6	2	3	2	2	4
School year	17	6	6	4	5	10
School-institution	56	20	24	17	7	14
Educational system	110	38	50	36	4	8
in all	284	100	140	100	49	100

The chart obviously says that in the newspaper "Dnes" (Today) there is twice as many contributions than in the newspaper "Právo" (Right). As far as the distribution of individual issues is concerned, it is very similar in both the newspapers. The most attention is paid to issues connected with the educational system and its changes. This results in the fact that throughout the whole year of 2000 in the Czech Republic there was in progress a more or less intensive public discussion about the then prepared *White Book* which was connected with clarifying attitudes to several controversial issues. Among these issues there was the issue of preserving or abolishing eight-year gymnasium, which cause double-tracking in the Czech educational system, and next there was a discussion about the future form of the secondary school final examination at all types of secondary schools. Both these issues became very soon a subject of political proclamations rather than of professional discussions. On the other hand, the issue of parents in relation to the school is the least frequent issue, even in the specialised journal on "family and school".

The private TV station "Nova" had in 2000 in its everyday news programme nearly twice as many contributions about school and educational system than the public TV station. The thematic distribution, too, as we can see in chart no. 2, is more balanced than in the case of the "state" television. Moreover, all the contributions concerned in any form with parents were

broadcast on TV "Nova". As far as the amount of interest in educational issues are concerned, the private television definitely wins over the state one. But only evaluation of these contributions will show what created such interest.

Figure no. 2: Issues concerning school and educational system in TV news programmes

	ČT1 news programme		*Nova news programme*	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
Teachers	7	21	11	18
Teaching	5	15	5	8
Students	5	15	12	20
Parents	0	0	8	13
School year	3	9	8	13
School - institution	2	6	7	12
Educational system	12	35	10	16
in all	34	100	61	100

How are these issues evaluated?

Let us first have a look at evaluation of the individual media contributions in the press (fig. no. 3) and then in the TV news programmes (fig. no. 4). The criteria for evaluation was a pure one. We judged every contribution from the point of view of the overall effect and predominant impression which is created in the reader or the looker-in. Is the impression positive and praising or negative and critical? Or is it just a pure information without any evaluation?

Fig. no. 3: Evaluation of media contributions in the press

	Dnes			*Právo*			*Rodina a škola*		
	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0
Teachers	33%	50%	17%	17%	78%	4%	0	0	100%
Teaching	63%	18%	18%	43%	29%	29%	47%	0	53%
Students	6%	56%	38%	5%	95%	0	0	18%	82%
Parents	17%	17%	67%	0	100%	0	50%	0	50%
School year	29%	6%	65%	33%	17%	50%	20%	0	80%
School - institution	52%	32%	16%	75%	21%	4%	71%	0	29%
Ed. system	22%	43%	35%	18%	38%	44%	0	0	100%

If we compare the newspapers "Dnes" (Today) and "Právo" (Right) according to the chart, we realise that "Právo" (Right) more often inclines to the negative evaluation of teachers in particular and issues connected with them. Very critical are also contributions about students (95 per cent of cases) and articles about parents make a negative impression too. The only exception are articles connected with teaching and with school as an institution. These articles

receive predominantly positive evaluation. The newspaper "Dnes" (Today) has the most critical views of teachers too, though this negative evaluation is not in more than half of the cases.

The journal "Rodina a škola" (Family and School) is a special case where there are nearly no contributions with negative impression, apart from 18 per cent of negative articles about students. Most of the contributions try to keep "neutrality in evaluation". Most of the articles about school as an institution are positive (71%) and as far as the articles about parents are concerned precisely half of them is negative and the other half praising. The journal seems to try to publish balanced articles as far as the content evaluation is concerned.

Fig. no. 4: Evaluation of media contributions in TV news programmes

	ČT1 and Nova		
	+	-	0
Teachers	0	83%	17%
Teaching	20%	40%	40%
Students	6%	71%	24%
Parents	0	0	100%
School year	36%	0	64%
School - institution	0	56%	44%
Educational system	13%	39%	48%

Note: Because of a small number of recorded cases, the chart presents data of both the TV channels together.

The TV news programmes do not favour teachers either. Majority of the news are very critical towards them (83%) and throughout the whole year of 2000 there was not a single piece of information praising the teachers. Students do not score very much better either. News about parents keep neutral attitude. Taking into consideration the concrete topics of the news about parents (see below), it is quite understandable. In the case of the TV news there is not a single case evaluating school as an institution positively. The educational system is positively evaluated only in 13 per cent of cases.

What role is ascribed to parents in the mass media?

This question cannot be safely answered because articles in the press and news contributions on television were very few in 2000. In the concrete, in the newspaper "Dnes" (Today) there were 6, in "Právo" (Right) 3, in the journal "Rodina a škola" (Family and School) 2 and in the TV "Nova" news programme 8. There was no contribution concerning parents in relation to the school in the news programmes of the public TV station "ČT1" throughout the whole year.

Just to make a picture, among the TV "Nova" contributions about parents there were these concrete issues: "some parents do not have enough money sources in order to send their children to a school skiing trip", "unemployed parents cannot give their children all they need for work at school", "parents apply at the municipal authorities for financial benefit for their children's stationery materials", "parents give money to their children for good results at school", "parents take their children with them for a holiday during the school year" etc.

Thus we may state that we do not find any evidence of the role parents play in relation to the school in the analysed media. Looking for any signs of co-operation and partnership between the parents and the school in the mass media news is completely in vain.

What is the overall media picture of the contemporary Czech school and educational system?

The overall media picture of the Czech school and educational system is rather a negative one. Texts "with minus indication" are most frequent in the communist newspaper "Právo" (Right). They form nearly a half of all contributions (49%). Positively inclined contributions can be found in less than in third of cases (29%). The rest consists of informative neutral articles. In the newspaper "Dnes" (Today) there can be found roughly the same number of positive and negative articles (36%). The rest consists of contributions with neutral evaluation. Thus it may be stated that "Dnes" (Today) is the only newspaper providing the public with balanced information about the school and educational system. The journal "Rodina a škola" (Family and School), as it is indicated in its orientation on specific audience composed of teachers and parents, is not very critical. It may be judged, in connection with the issue we are interested in, as a predominantly neutral and positive journal.

As far as the TV news programmes are concerned, out of the overall number of 99 pieces of news about the school and educational system on both the TV channels in 2000 there were 45 with negative evaluation, 41 with neutral evaluation and only 10 with positive evaluation. These facts are particularly prominent in the case of the private TV station "Nova" where only 2 (!) contributions out of all (61) contained positive information. The public channel "ČT1" is rather a bit more balanced in its evaluation. But still, there is a double number of negative contributions (38%) in comparison to the positive ones (24%).

What information is then given to the public and parents in particular about the Czech school and issues connected with it? Predominantly, the information is critical and contains negative evaluation. The worst picture is created about teachers who are the first persons the

parents should enter contacts with and cooperate with for the sake of their children. It is probably very difficult to build up a partner relationship between teachers and parents in a situation in which one of the parties (parent) may be unsure in their trust to the other party (teachers) by the media's point of view.

Conclusion

If we are to evaluate those wider – contextual conditions for the creation and development of the parental partnership with the school, we need to state that in the case of the Czech Republic they are not very supporting. Although we are aware of the fact that there are lots of other circumstances, we concentrated on two of them only: on the legislative framework and on the media framework.

Legislative conditions do not, of course, forbid parents to enter the school but at the same time they do not open the shared space. It seems that it is only up to the good will of both the sides - parents and teachers - to create such a space.

The media context is not very positive of school issues and teachers in particular. The public, and thus also the parents, have to find their way in this unfavourable picture created by the media in such way that this picture is not an obstacle in everyday communication with their school partners and this is not easy at all.

Professionally motivated partnership between the family and the school is, at least at the theoretical level, mostly accepted. But the reality is rather different.

Husén says that in order to create the school community concentrated on the common core of values, one needs to rely on bonds and contacts at the background of the educational context. He understands it as the main challenge for parents, teachers and school administrators, particularly because of the fact that the school is one of the educational actors in the society. That is why it is necessary to head aims to a wider framework of interactions with other educational institutions (Husén, 1992). Let us add that it is important to try to get to know and to understand this wider framework. We tried to make exactly that attempt.

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